

such a stellar background, to ultimately be objected to.

So I will I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 815, Monde Muyangwa, to be an Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; and that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. Reserving the right to object, USAID awarded a \$200 million grant for a 10-year viral emergence early warning project known as PREDICT.

We have uncovered evidence of possible embezzlement, possible money laundering, and insider threats, as well as other concerns related to the PREDICT and other USAID grant awards.

PREDICT was led by a consortium spearheaded by UC Davis and EcoHealth Alliance, which funneled taxpayer dollars to the Wuhan Institute of Virology to conduct risky research on potential pandemic pathogens, including bat coronavirus research.

USAID and NIH both awarded multi-million dollar grants to EcoHealth Alliance during the same 5-year period leading up to and immediately preceding the COVID-19 outbreak.

EcoHealth is unable to produce to NIH proof of its research, such as lab notebooks and virus samples, so we are simply asking USAID for proof of the EcoHealth research they funded. We requested records from USAID that grant recipients are legally required to maintain. Our requests are, indeed, fact-based.

At this point, we believe either the USAID staff is withholding the records from Congress or they have failed to access them through the UC Davis and EcoHealth Alliance. Either option is unacceptable. As such, I object to the unanimous consent motion but look forward to working with the chairman to address these issues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, through the Chair, would my colleague say that—have you not been provided three rounds of documents that have been requested?

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. Unfortunately, the documents were not what we asked for. They are incomplete. They don't give us what we are looking for. But we would welcome the opportunity to sit down with the chairman and try to address—

Mr. MENENDEZ. Through the Presiding Officer, has my colleague not

been offered a briefing by USAID to try to answer the rest of his questions?

This is an extraordinary amount of information being offered for someone who is not even a member of the Foreign Relations Committee. But, nonetheless, in order to accommodate him, we want to get to a point that he feels comfortable to do so. Have you not been offered a briefing, which you have not yet accepted?

Mr. MARSHALL. Not that I am aware of.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Well, my understanding is that there has been, Mr. President, an offer of a briefing made to the Senator.

And, by the way, this has nothing to do with Dr. Muyangwa. She has nothing to do with any of this. She is nominated to be the Assistant Administrator for Africa, nothing to do with China, nothing to do with Wuhan, nothing to do with anything else.

I would urge my colleague, if you have all this information about illicit activities, please bring it forward. The committee would like to consider it. But I haven't seen any of it. It is time to put up or shut up.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat, of New Jersey, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of the Minister-Counselor, to be Director General of the Foreign Service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

ROBB ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SHOOTING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I begin, I want to express my sorrow at the terrible shooting in Texas on Tuesday that claimed the lives of 2 teachers and 19 schoolchildren.

Like a lot of Americans, I cannot imagine the anguish these children's parents are facing right now as they grieve for sons and daughters whom they will never again drive to school or welcome home at the end of the day.

I pray that the Lord will be with them in their suffering and that they will receive the comfort and strength that they need.

My prayers are with the entire Uvalde community—the families of those killed, the injured, the teachers, and students who suffered such terror, the medical and law enforcement personnel who responded, and all those reeling from this terrible attack.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Mr. President, this past weekend, I headed to Murdo, SD, the small town of around 500 people where I grew up.

Needless to say, any trip to Murdo brings back a lot of memories. First and foremost are those memories of my parents Pat and Harold Thune and of growing up with my three brothers and sister.

We were lucky kids to have my parents. My mom was a wonderful, loving, eternally optimistic mother who spent most of my growing up years as our school librarian. She was responsible for making sure that we Thune kids got some culture, whether we wanted it or not. She was the one who made sure we got an introduction to music and learned how to play the piano. With her encouragement, I even joined the swing choir—although I will spare you, Mr. President, from any recitals.

In the summer, she would make us come inside for an hour every day to read. I didn't always want to come inside on those beautiful summer days. At the time, I would have much preferred to keep shooting hoops with the basket my dad had attached to a pole in our backyard. But today I am grateful for every minute that she made us spend with books.

My dad, he was our hero—a division I basketball player, a World War II combat pilot. He was a teacher at my high school. And a coach. And the athletic director. Oh, and also the bus driver.

So between him and my mom as the librarian, we Thune kids were practically never away from our parents' watchful eyes. I am so grateful to have had my dad's coaching in sports and in life. My dad taught us, as players, to play as a team. He didn't like ball hogs or people who were in the game for the personal glory. He believed your job as a member of a team was to make the people around you better. If somebody else was in a better position to take the shot, you always made the extra pass. You didn't try to pad your own statistics. You played for the good of the team.

It is an attitude I have tried to carry with me throughout my life. My parents gave us Thune kids a strong set of values and an inheritance of faith. In good times and bad, faith was their anchor and the Holy Scriptures, their roadmap. And I am grateful that they taught us who to turn to in times of trouble.

Mr. President, being in Murdo reminded me of my parents, as it always does. It also made me reflect on just how lucky I was to grow up in a small town—and small-town South Dakota in particular. It is true that growing up in a small town meant that my parents had heard all about any of the Thune kids' misdemeanors before we even made it home.

But even with that little drawback, small-town life was wonderful. In Murdo, you know everyone, and everyone knows you. And that gave us a sense of community and belonging that we carry to this day. Growing up in Murdo also taught us just how much we are all connected.

Mr. President, South Dakotans are independent people, but we also rely on

our neighbors when the going gets tough. And the going can get tough. But, in Murdo, we knew that if a roof collapsed under the weight of snow or a windstorm came through and wiped out a barn or we lost a friend or family member, the whole community would rally around to help.

Small-town life has a beautiful simplicity. On summer nights, my dad would take us to get ice cream cones, and then we would drive down to the White River. We would roll down the windows and feel the breeze and watch the sun drop below the horizon—no staring at iPhones or checking likes on social media.

Those were idyllic evenings. Moments like those kept us connected to what really mattered: our family, our community, the land. Mr. President, the values I saw reflected growing up in Murdo are reflected in towns all across our State. In Murdo, I learned the character of South Dakotans, the work ethic, the commitment to freedom coupled with the belief in personal responsibility and the sense of responsibility to the broader community.

Agriculture, of course, is the lifeblood of South Dakota, and it is a hard way of life. It is backbreaking work in all weathers, always with the risk that all your work can be wiped out in moments by a storm.

Anyone who grows up on a farm or ranch knows that everybody has to pull their weight or the farm or ranch just don't survive. And I think that grounding in agriculture has helped give South Dakotans their reputation for having a strong work ethic and a commitment to getting the job done.

And I am not kidding about that reputation. As a Senator, I have traveled to a number of places around the world, and I regularly meet people—often military members—who talk about the work ethic of the South Dakotans they know. I am pretty sure it is that work ethic and sense of personal responsibility that is responsible for the fact that South Dakota has always punched above its weight when it comes to military service, as well as the patriotism that runs strongly through the South Dakota character.

South Dakotans cherish their freedoms, and they also believe that with freedom comes responsibility. And they have a deep appreciation for the Founders' vision that has allowed us to enjoy such freedom and for the sacrifices that have been required to secure it. With that comes an expectation that each generation has to do its part to pay freedom's price and protect all that we have been given.

The South Dakota values I learned growing up helped shape my political philosophy: my belief that government should be limited and that it is best when it is closest to the people; and that if a matter can be handled at the State or local level, it should be; that the legacy of the past is something to be cherished and preserved while leaving, at the same time, room for change

and adaptation when needed; that freedom is a sacred gift, one that must be defended, and that with freedom comes responsibility; and, finally, that while government is necessary, government is not where we should look for salvation.

Mr. President, the legacy of growing up in South Dakota is a precious one. We didn't have much money, but we were very rich in the things that mattered. And I am deeply grateful for those years in Murdo, for the teachers and coaches and others in the community who invested in me, and for everyone who continues to make it feel like home and for the privilege of living in the Mount Rushmore State.

It is my very great honor to represent the people of South Dakota in the U.S. Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, most of my people in Louisiana, I think, are probably much like your people in Maine. Most of my people—most of our people—they just get up every day and go to work. They obey the law. They pay their taxes. They try to do the right thing by their kids, try to teach their kids morals. And they try to save a little money for retirement as they enjoy living in what they believe is the greatest country in all of human history. But many of my people, Mr. President, are struggling.

President Biden took office on January 20 of last year. So—what are we?—we are in day 490 of Build Back Better. From where many of my people sit, nothing has been built and nothing is back and nothing is better. There is not a more appropriate example of that than the cost of living, inflation.

When President Biden took office, the cost of gasoline in my State was \$2—\$2 a gallon. It is between \$4.15 and \$4.25 right now. And it is not just gasoline, Mr. President. I mean, I don't need to tell you. A dozen eggs now costs \$2.52. Ground beef is \$5.41. A pound of chicken is \$4.10.

The price of oil, the price of gasoline affects so much in terms of our economy. I mean, most of our food and our clothes and our plastics, the things we use every day, are delivered by air, by van, by tanker, all of which use gasoline. Pharmaceuticals are affected by the price of oil.

I don't think it is any secret that the Biden administration is trying to disrupt the production of oil in America. I think that is just a fact. We see it in the President canceling leases on Federal lands in the Gulf of Mexico, in ANWR. We see it from the difficult regulatory environment for oil and gas producers.

The President has just promulgated new rules for the National Environmental Policy Act. If those new rules come to fruition, it will be impossible to open a new pipeline in America, and I think we have to be honest about that.

Now, to be fair, the Biden administration is trying to disrupt the production of oil and gas, especially oil, for environmental reasons, of which we are both aware. But, instead, the Biden administration—this seems curious to me—wants us to buy oil from foreign countries. And those foreign countries deliver their oil in tankers that use 2,000 gallons of fuel an hour and emit 8 tons of carbon dioxide into the environment per hour. The irony of this is rich.

Inflation and oil—once again, I think so much of our inflation in all of the products that we need to maintain our standard of living today starts with the price of oil. Now, President Biden has said he has no control over the price of oil and, therefore, the price of gasoline. But, Mr. President, you can't have regulatory control over the drilling, the transporting, the storage, the refining, the trading, and the taxation of oil as the President does and say you have no control over the price of the commodity. I mean, that is just not true.

Here is what most people in my State see, Mr. President. The President, in March of last year, sent every American a \$1,400 stimulus check. And they were grateful, but then the Biden administration, for its next trick, crashed their 401(k)s, increased their food bills by as much—for some as much as \$3,000 a year; increased their rent, for many as much as \$2,000 a year; and increased their gas bills for many as much as \$1,000 a year.

And they don't see that as a good trade, Mr. President. And it is all derived from President Biden's energy policy, which is—here is his energy policy: wind, solar, and wishful thinking. It is just not realistic. And among other things, it is hurting our country. It is hurting my people in Louisiana desperately because of the rise in gasoline prices.

I was very disappointed to see this week that the President has changed his approach to inflation and the price of gasoline. He has said we are now in a transition period, and he said it as if that were a positive thing. He said we are on a transition, and when we get through this transition, we are going to be stronger than ever because we are not going to have to rely on fossil fuels.

And I am thinking, you know, I respect the President; but honestly, what planet did he parachute in from?

I had just finished reading JPMorgan's energy report; and JPMorgan, looking out until 2030—not 2050, 2030—just 8 years from now—said, in 2030, at the rate we are going, the demand for energy in America will be 20 percent greater than the supply. You know what that is going to do to the price, Mr. President. The JPMorgan energy report said that, at a minimum, in 2030, 8 years from now, the demand for oil is going to be 10 percent higher in America and the demand for natural gas is going to be 18 percent higher. You know what that is going to do to